THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • TUESDAY • JANUARY 18, 2022 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 20 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianexpress twitter.com/newindianexpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

fssai

DEADLINE FOR FEEDBACK ON GM FOOD NORMS EXTENDED

People can now submit feedback on the draft regulations till Feb 5, the FSSAI said on Monday. Original deadline was Jan 15

DECISION AFTER PRESSURE FROM RSS OUTFIT

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)'s decision to push the last date comes in the wake of protests from anti-GM groups, activists, farmers and NGOs. Last week, the RSS-affiliated Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), too, put its weight behind the anti-GM campaign shooting off a letter to the FSSAI asking it to withdraw its "irresponsible" proposals

BLANKET NOD FOR USE AS INGREDIENT?

- SJM co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan also launched an online campaign highlighting GM food's impact on health and nature
- According to the draft norms, once the FSSAI grants approval, no other clearance is required for GM food to be used as an ingredient in any product, except infant food | P9

Nov 15, 2021
WHEN THE FSSAI RELEASED THE DRAFT GUIDELINES ON GM FOOD

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Drone strike kills 2 Indians in UAE

Trouble to escalate after first attack by Houthi rebels, as Gulf nation says it has a right to respond

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

IT's called the safest country in the Gulf region. Yet, three people, including two Indians, were killed in a drone attack near the Abu Dhabi airport on Monday. The terror message was clear — don't think the UAE is a safe place to live and work any longer.

Yemen-based Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for the attack. Tension in the region is set to rise as the UAE has vowed to retaliate. "This terrorist attack by the Houthi militia on areas and civilian facilities on Emirati soil... will not go unpunished," UAE foreign ministry said.

A Pakistani national also died in the explosion. All the three deceased were employees of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc). Six others were hurt in the attack but are out of danger.

Iran-backed rebels

Yemen's Houthi rebels have claimed responsibility for the attack in UAE. The Houthis, backed by Iran, have in the past launched several cross-border missile and drone attacks on Saudi Arabia but this is the first time they are claiming an attack deep inside Emirates. Monday's attack is reportedly a retaliation against the Saudi-led coalition's offensive against the Houthis

The identity of those killed could not be immediately known and the authorities were working on it, India's Ambassador to the UAE Sunjay Sudhir told this newspaper on phone. He also sought to downplay concerns saying that the UAE, which is home to around 35 lakh Indians, is a safe place.

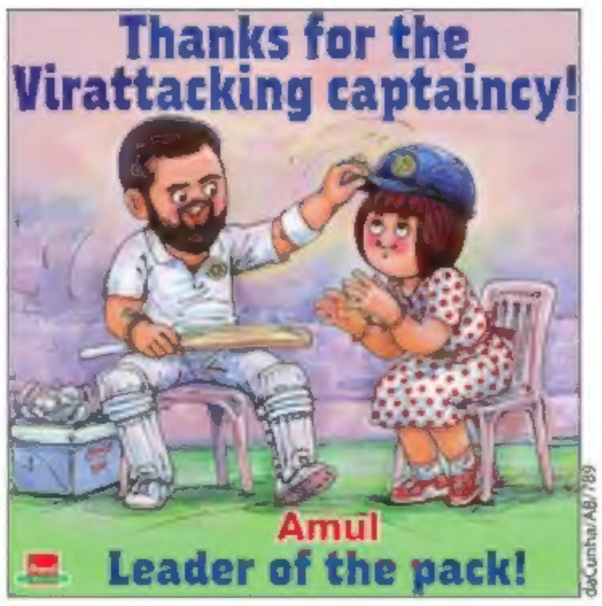
According to reports, booby-trapped drones hit Adnoc's storage facility at Mussafah industrial area near the airport, triggering multiple explosions. Three petroleum tankers exploded in the fire.

The industrial area is just 22 km from the city centre and has an oil pipeline network including 36 storage tanks, from which heavy vehicles transport fuel across the country.

The UAE is a key member of the Saudi-led coalition that has waged war against the Houthis since 2015. The Houthis had recently threatened to launch strikes against the UAE after losing the energy-rich Shabwa province to the coalition. The province is a strategic asset as it has significant oil and gas fields as well as two ports for exporting energy.

It's not just the Houthis who were targeting the UAE. The Emirate was facing threats from Shia militias in Iraq as well, suggesting that Monday's attack could have been well orchestrated.

Saudi-led coalition had issued a statement that they had destroyed three drones in southern Saudi Arabia. However, it provided no evidence to substantiate the claims. It has been targeted by Yemen through drones and missiles.



IRON ORE
COURT ORDERS LIVE BIDDING OF STOCK

The illegal iron ore shipped from Ballari in the mid-2000s has been lying in the ports of Baithkol and Belekere in Karwar following a CBI inquiry into the illegality | P4

Laws on inter-state water disputes must change: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Monday insisted that the Union government should do away with certain legal provisions in interstate river water disputes to ensure faster environmental clearances to speed up projects which are in the pipeline.

"It is possible to draw more investments for infrastructure development by simplifying environment and forest department clearances and rules in the finance ministry," Bommai said, advocating the need to revisit the rules governing inter-state water disputes which are delaying implementation of irrigation projects.

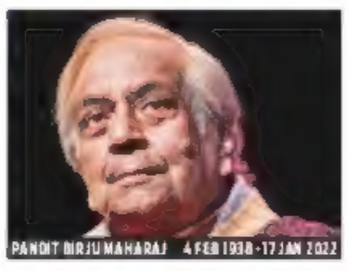
He stressed that maximum utility of river basins by using technology, keeping aside politics, will create a win-win situation for all riparian states. With this, all stakeholders will become a party to the solution instead of the problem, he said.

"Environmental laws are turning out to be an impediment for speeding up infrastructure development projects," he pointed out.

Bommai's was speaking at the inauguration of southern zone chief ministers' virtual conference on Prime Minister's 'Gati Shakthi' programme, which was chaired by Union Minister for Surface Transport, Highways and MSMEs Nitin Gadkari. His statements acquire significance in the wake of Mekedatu balancing reservoir project for which the environmental clearance is still pending. Analysts said it is also significant for Mahadayi project.

CONTINUED ON: P4

SYNONYM OF KATHAK, COMPLETE KALAKAAR



WHEN Maharaj ji accepted my invite to take a workshop at my home in Connecticut, I was very nervous. But much to our surprise, he turned out to be a simple man immersed in dance and music. He would eat home-made food, make sketches on paper and after the workshop even invite all parents and sing for them. When a life opens up before you like that how does one start to describe it!

Pandit Birju Maharaj was a legend in his lifetime, a synonym for Kathak and a complete *Kalakaar*, an artist par excellence. Born as Brij Mohan Mishra in the illustrious family of Ishwari Prasad, with Kalka-Bindadin Maharaj as his grandfathers and Achhan Maharaj as his father, he further added tremendously to the repertoire of his heritage.

NEELIMA BERI
Director of Kalaleen Center for Traditional Learning

Maharaj ji passed away in Delhi on Monday. He was 83. Maharaj ji started his *taalim* from his father at a very tender age, but he was only nine when his father passed away. He then learnt from his illustrious uncles, Shambhu Maharaj and Lachhu Maharaj. They had very different styles of dancing, one placing emphasis on the masculine style and the other on the feminine (Lasya). He told us stories of how he had to keep their styles different for maintaining peace with his uncles.

In 1953, Kapila Vatsyayan, a disciple of Achhan Maharaj, called Birju to Delhi to work at Sangeet Bharati. He would go to the school every morning and do his *riyaaz* in a store room for 4-5 hours till the sweat of his feet made the floor slippery. Then he would try his hands at various instruments in the store.

When he was 19-20, Maharaj ji joined the Bharatiya Kala Kendra and started creating a grammar for understanding every movement. He introduced many new *sams*, the ending pose of a dancer. All these experiments were very well received by the audience during the late 50s and early 60s. He also choreographed many successful dance dramas.

Maharaj ji later joined Kathak Kendra. As he had many international students, he simplified his compositions by making them numerical. He broke long rhythmic compositions into playful words for kids. Many of his complicated *tihais* (polyrhythmic technique) were made playful for the audience while retaining their complexities.

Maharaj ji performed extensively all over India and abroad and recalled many hilarious incidents from this time. One particularly memorable one was at Jhansi. The rowdy crowd was brought under control by him by making an extempore piece of Rani of Jhansi fighting the British.

Maharaj ji then set up his institute, Kalashram. He was very fond of spicy street food and *malai* of Lucknow. He loved my *paranthas* and called me *paranthewali* for quite some time. He also loved gadgets of all types but not in black colour. He was also the first Kathak artist to receive the Padma Vibhushan.

New Covid cases dip in state; Bommai rules out lockdown

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

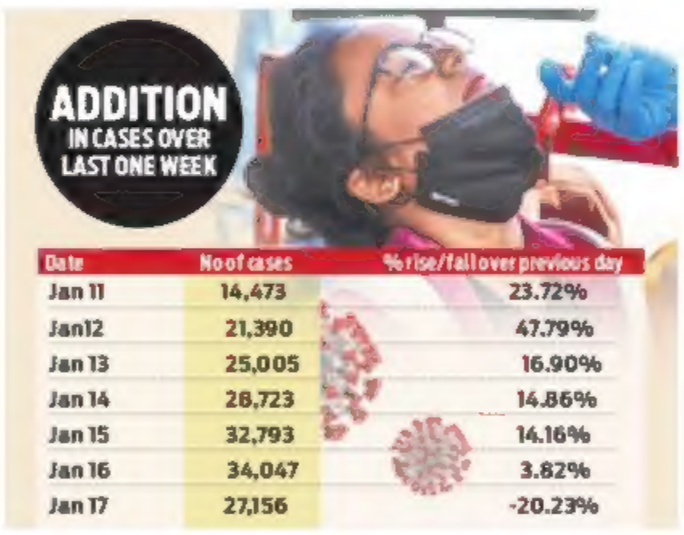
THE number of fresh Covid cases added to the tally in Karnataka dipped to 27,156 as compared to 34,047 the previous day despite the increased number of daily tests touching 2.17 lakh. With the lesser number of cases despite a high number of tests, the day positivity rate dipped to 12.45 per cent compared to the previous day's 19.29 per cent.

The state also reported 287 new Omicron cases taking the tally to 766.

Though it is too early to rejoice, the dip in the added number of cases and the day positivity rate is reported at a time when members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) were expecting a peak in cases.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai held a meeting with health department officials, TAC members and concerned ministers on Monday to review the Covid curbs. But he has deferred the decision on reviewing night curfew and weekend curfew until Friday. Revenue Minister R Ashoka, however, hinted at relaxations if the trend in decline in cases and test positivity rate continues.

He reiterated that the chief minister clearly ruled out the option of imposing a lockdown and issued several instructions to ensure comprehensive management of Covid. P3



Date	No of cases	% rise/fall over previous day
Jan 11	14,473	23.72%
Jan12	21,390	47.79%
Jan 13	25,005	16.90%
Jan 14	28,723	14.86%
Jan 15	32,793	14.16%
Jan 16	34,047	3.82%
Jan 17	27,156	-20.23%

NATIONWIDE	JAN 16	JAN 17
Fresh cases	2,71,202	2,58,089
Recoveries	1,38,331	1,51,740
Deaths	314	385

KARNATAKA	JAN 16	JAN 17
Fresh cases	34,047	27,156
Recoveries	5,902	7,827
Deaths	13	14

JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
January 16: 39,46,348 doses
January 17: 61,95,050 doses
TOTAL DOSES: 1,57,61,53,478

Third wave wave ebbing in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata?

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @New Delhi

THOUGH the ongoing third wave of Covid-19 continues to be building in the country, the curve in a few big cities may have started to bend.

An analysis of daily Covid cases and deaths in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata shows that the wave may have already peaked there.

Mumbai logged 7,895 new cases on Sunday; its figures have been declining since January 7 when the city had a whopping 20,971 fresh cases. The earlier one-day high for Mumbai was 11,163 cases, registered on April 4 last year during the second wave of the pandemic.

In Delhi, where the daily Covid cases had crossed 30,000 on two days late last week, less than 28,000 were recorded on Sunday. Though the number of tests, too, dropped a tad in the city, the good news is the fall in the test positivity rate (TPR) — under-28% now after crossing 30% earlier.

Kolkata, which had shown an explosive TPR of over 70% for several days, is also reporting a marginal decline. Also, the daily case count in the city is now under 6,000 as against 10,000-plus earlier.

A senior member of the national Covid-19 task force told this newspaper that the government is watching these numbers closely, adding the wave appears to be ebbing. "However, we will need to see the trend for about 10 days before reaching a conclusion," he said.

Health economist Rijo M John pointed out that at the national level, too, the most comforting factor is the low level of hospitalisation.

EXPRESS READ

India's growth will be green: PM

New Delhi/Davos: "India's growth for the next 25 years will be green and clean," Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said at the special address at the World Economic Forum's online Davos Agenda 2022 summit. P9

Polls in Punjab now on Feb 20

New Delhi: The Election Commission on Monday decided to hold the single-phase Assembly polls in Punjab on February 20 instead of February 14 in view of Guru Ravidas Jayanti. Several political parties had approached the EC to postpone the polls. P10

Negligence by staff led to kids' death

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Belagavi

THREE children from Ramdurg taluk in Belagavi district who died after taking measles rubella (MR) vaccine on January 12 were victims of negligence by the health staff, who violated basic vaccination guidelines, admitted Reproductive and Child Health Officer (RCHO) Ishwarappa Gadad, here on Monday.

He said, "The health staff from the Salahalli Primary Health Centre who had collected vaccines from the centre on January 10, were expected to bring back the unused vaccines to the centre the same day. But they kept the vaccine box with them and gave the vaccine shots to children on January 11 and 12. This mistake took the lives of innocent children."

The Salahalli PHC staff had kept the MR vaccines in a freezer at one of the hotels in the village, disrupting the cold chain of the vaccine. On January 11, they administered the vaccine at Mallapur, where one child – Chetan Pujari, died the next day. On January 12, the staff vaccinated four children at Bochabal village. All the four developed symptoms of fever, vomiting and diarrhoea. Among them, Pavitra Hulagur died while being taken to hospital on January 13. CONTINUED ON: P5

China grew at 8.1% in 2021 on low base effect

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

CHINESE economy grew 8.1% in 2021, the fastest in 10 years, driven by low base effect. The annual growth rate is lower than economists' average estimates of 8.4%. However, GDP growth in the fourth quarter at 4% bettered analysts' expectation of 3.6%, data released on Monday showed.

Macroeconomic futures showed that fixed asset investments in 2021 grew 4.9%, beating expectations of a 4.8% growth. Investment in real estate rose 4.4%, while that in infrastructure was up 0.4%. Investment in manufacturing shot up by 13.5% in 2021 from a year ago. Industrial production registered a 4.3% year-on-year growth in December 2021 beating analyst's estimate of 3.6%.

Though the 2021 growth rate looks impressive, it is more a recovery from the Covid-driven slump in 2020, when growth had fallen to 2.2%. Analysts are not bullish on China as growth may slip again in future.

14 DISTS SHOW LOW SEX RATIO AT BIRTH

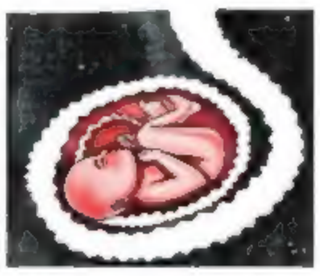
ASHWINI M SRIPAD @Bengaluru

A technician in Mandya was caught red-handed for running a scanning centre where he conducted sex determination test on foetuses. To top it, he was not even a radiologist but an ordinary technician who learnt how to do scanning and opened his own centre. He also referred couples to some doctors who conducted illegal abortions.

Revealing this incident that took place a few months ago, Dr Chandrakala, Deputy Director, Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Section (PC&PNDT), Department of Health, said they seized the equipment and shut down the centre. But nothing happens to perpetrators as court cases take a long time, she said.

A combination of many such incidents is what has led to a decline in sex ratio at birth in 14 districts in the state. But overall, the sex ratio at birth (females per 1,000 males) has improved in the state from 979 in 2015-16 to 1,034 2019-20, shows the National Family Health Survey.

The 14 districts that have recorded low sex ratio are Belagavi, Bidar, Vijayapura,



Chamarajanagar, Chikkamagaluru, Dakshina Kannada, Davanagere, Hassan, Haveri, Kodagu, Koppal, Raichur, Ramanagara, Uttara Kannada, Yadgir and Bengaluru Rural. NFHS says Hassan recorded the ratio at 1,140 in 2015-16, but it declined to 872 in 2019-20. Similarly, Bidar that recorded 1,075 in 2015-16 recorded 898 in 2019-20.

A senior officer from the Health Department, requesting anonymity, said NFHS, which is conducted by the central government, is a sample-based survey, while the state government follows the Health Management Information System (HMIS) which gives more comprehensive data. "But the trend remains the same, and many districts in Karnataka are lagging in this parameter," he added. P5